

Subjectivity and the Constitution of Company Ethos Verified Through a Disaster Communication

Ana Lucia Magalhaes

FATEC - Faculdade de Tecnologia de Cruzeiro and Guaratingueta

Bruno Andreoni

Servtec Engenharia

Abstract

Discourse, rather than simple language production, shows complexity, and as such is a privileged space for subjective construction. Since its origin, corporate communication gives paramount importance to objectivity and clarity. Its discourses, as a result, are elaborated focusing on facts; the style is journalistic, supposedly the most objective (Kunsch, 2009). On the other hand, one of the objectives of corporate communication is creation and maintenance of company ethos. Since company image is based not only on facts, but also on impressions, which depend on an audience, it is fair to consider the study of subjectivemes, a concept coined by French theoretician Kerbrat-Orecchioni, as helpful in identifying subjectivity and its role in corporate communication. A typical accident communication was chosen to verify the meaning of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs within it, and these meanings analyzed to show their contribution to the construction of corporate ethos.

Discourse and Subjectivity

In most contexts, organizational communications attempt to achieve the clarity that comes with objectivity. Nonetheless, the very nature of discourse is subjective (Benveniste, 1974). Our hypothesis is that subjectivity in discourse is an important agent for the development of corporate ethos. The analysis of a typical text will seek to illustrate the mechanisms of ethos construction, through identification and analysis of the marks of subjectivity detailed in the concepts developed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1997).

Organizational Communications as Discourse

First of all, it is necessary to understand the individualizing characteristics of organizational discourse. Such a task demands some degree of abstraction, since one cannot speak of one discourse gender therein used. In such a domain, there are press releases, house organs, newsletters, sites, blogs and many other resources. Of course organizational communications are not limited to documents like these, written to reach the general public. Organizational communication is also concerned with other types of documents not considered here, like letters and reports.

The pieces written for the general public have one point in common: they utilize a language close to journalistic, since they intend to convey objective information and in that way they also differ from advertising. In other words, in order to establish corporate image in a credible way, there is a need to emphasize logos, rather than pathos, and ethos must be anchored on facts. Clarity, veracity, conciseness and consistency are characteristics of corporate discourse, since contradictions will

undermine credibility and will likely hamper corporate image. It is known, however, that no discourse is exempt from subjectivity - this applies even to scientific texts. Among other scholars, Emile Benveniste (1974), French linguist and theoretician of discourse, was a pioneer in categorizing subjectivity as inherent to discourse. Organizational communication has to somehow deal with that.

Another author worth noting is the Belgian philosopher Michel Meyer (1991) who introduced problematology as important to the development of a new theory of argument. Problematology focus on the role of language in human actions, particularly through the questioning process. Meyer proposed three levels of problem: weak, when a question can be easily resolved (literal sense); large, when a question does not have an answer, but there are criteria for resolution; maximum, when there are no criteria for resolution and the question takes to other questions, for example, poems that can have different interpretations.

Marks of Subjectivity in Organizational Communication

According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1994), the study of subjectivity can contribute to research in a number of areas: concepts and values change from culture to culture, from individual to individual; and perceptions, experiences and even personal goals influence enunciation, particularly when axiology (the study of values and value judgments) is involved. Discourse cannot be understood as simple production of language – it involves a complexity mostly originated from its subjective content, present in phrase construction and in the choice of words (Ducrot, 1987).

Ivy Lee, a journalist by training and considered by some to be the founder of modern public relations, wrote, when hired by John D. Rockefeller to improve his public image, a Declaration of Principles. The text written in 1906 by Ivy Lee (as cited in Russell, 2006) reads, in part:

This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency. If you think any of our matter ought properly to go to your business office, do not use it. Our matter is accurate. Further details on any subject treated will be supplied promptly, and any editor will be assisted most carefully in verifying directly any statement of fact. ... In brief, our plan is frankly, and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which it is of value and interest to the public to know about.

Despite the writer's intention to be objective, it is possible to verify a strong presence of subjectivity from the beginning of the text, at the very moment the narrator takes the role of "discourse actor" (Benveniste, 1974). The statement by Ivy Lee "this is not a secret press bureau" does not by itself guarantee transparency.

The presence of adjectives and adverbs emphasizes the subjective character of the text: *frankly, openly, prompt, accurate, carefully, of value* and *interest*. Who determined the qualification of services rendered? Who is the enunciating subject? An enunciation subject or author therefore exists who determines, enunciates and elects pieces of information as true.

Another paragraph of Ivy Lee's statement (1906) shows an even higher degree of subjectivity:

Corporations and public institutions give out much information in which the news point is lost to view. Nevertheless, it is quite as important to the public to have this news as it is to the establishments themselves to give it currency.

As the author states that “the news point is lost to view” one could understand, for example, that this applies to all corporations. It is expected that the reader knows that it is not true that all organizations behave that way. The statement, therefore, counts on previous knowledge by the reader, and this expectation is particularly subjective. There is more anticipation of previous knowledge by the reader in the remaining sentence of the paragraph, since it is not clear in the text why it is “important to the public to have this news.”

There is an interesting paradox in this Declaration of Principles: the more the text tries to be objective, the more it becomes subjective. This happens because the author had a concern to be objective that made his beliefs stronger than his praxis. In other words, he wants his reader to believe that the press bureau he directs is a producer of truth. Such discursive desire (*faire croire*) is essentially subjective. A keen look at the text sees more opinion than fact described by an objective text.

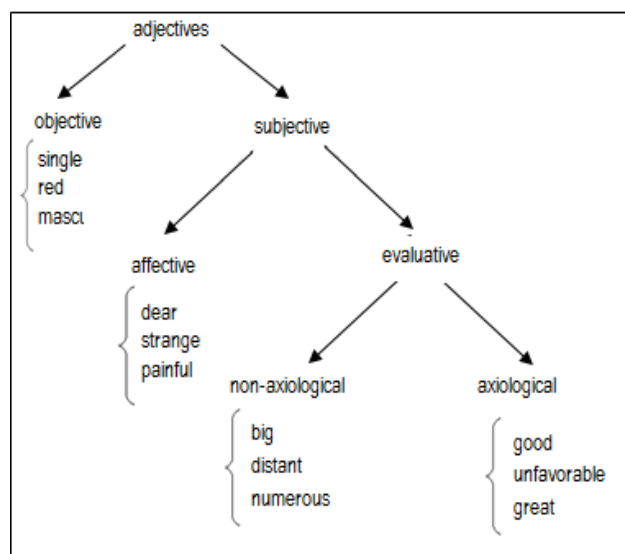
Though it cannot be said that certain grammatical classes are intrinsically producers of subjectivity, Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1997), a French linguist and researcher, shows the mechanisms underlying the use of grammatical classes to produce a diversity of meanings. Kerbrat-Orecchioni defines subjectivemes as grammatical classes that, depending on the context, make the text more or less subjective. The study of subjectivemes is helpful in devising organizational ethos, as we proceed to demonstrate.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni, following Benveniste’s work, listed and described the loci of subjectivity and developed markers, defining subjective words as affective, evaluative, axiological, non-axiological and modalizing. According to that theoretician, every lexical unit is, in a sense, subjective, since words are symbols to interpret things. Since the world is not isomorphic (not everything has the same structure), objects cannot be tagged according to general rules. Discursive productions shape in their own way the referential universe and organize the world through abstraction. The grammatical classes that can host subjectivemes are adjectives, nouns, verbs and adverbs.

Adjectives

Orecchioni (1997) contends that everything is relative in the use of adjectives. Figure 1 shows her taxonomy proposed.

Figure 1. Adjectives Classification According to Orecchioni



She distinguishes the *objective adjectives*, which enunciate a quality independent from the enunciator, from *subjective adjectives*, that imply an emotive reaction or value judgment. The subjective adjectives can be affective, if they portray a feeling experienced by the enunciator; or evaluative, if they describe an appreciation on the quality of the being or thing. The evaluative adjectives can be axiological or non-axiological, depending on whether they express a value judgment. The present paper is concerned only with the subjective adjectives, which are related to language on an interpretive level.

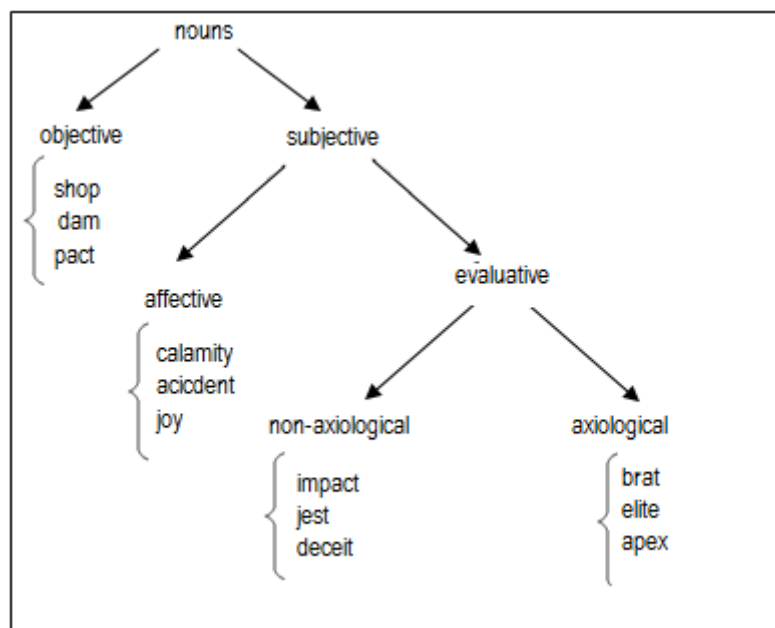
The following notes are relevant:

1. Certain affinities exist between affective and axiological evaluative adjectives. For example, “ugly” may be a product of emotion or a neutral evaluation.
2. The evaluative adjective is used according to a double standard: internal - the object that has some quality, and external - the person perceives a quality in that object.
3. The use of the evaluative adjective depends also on the idea of the speaker in relation to the standard.
4. In general, evaluative adjectives are argumentative if the lexemes “but” and “even.”
5. Negative and positive adjectives are non-symmetrical: *useful*, for example, implies a whole scale of usefulness; *useless* is absolute.
6. There are degrees of use of semantic values: a value can be imposed through strength and constancy, or the speaker can direct the interpretation to certain values, without running the risk of being accused of deceit.

Nouns

Most affective and evaluative nouns stem from verbs or adjectives. There are, however, words that are intrinsically nouns and can be laudatory or deprecating. Those are called axiological (see Figure 2) – they express a value judgment. One should be careful in differentiating the axiological and the stylistic.

Figure 2. Nouns Classification According to Orecchioni



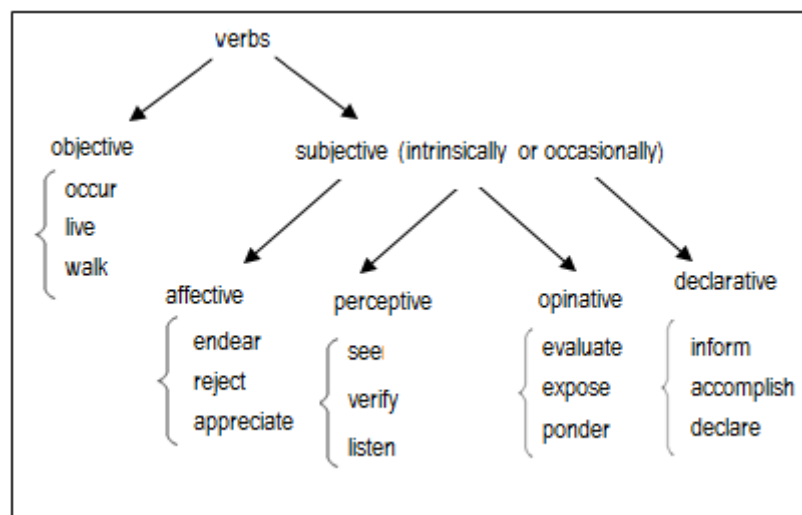
As it is easy to observe, nouns are classified in the same manner as adjectives. Nouns are objective when they designate some entity without any value judgment or feeling. Saying, for example, *table*, without a context, does not involve any type of evaluation. Even when one says a word like *pact*, that may signify an approach to some peaceful solution, it is not clear if it is a good or bad pact.

On the other hand, when a situation is deemed a *calamity* it is being qualified as something powerful and devastating. If the calamity refers to one person, chances are that that noun is also affective. Such connotation is not strictly axiological, unlike *elite*, for example, that places the person or group among the best.

Verbs

The classification of verbs by Kerbrat-Orecchioni has important differences from the classification of adjectives and nouns. For that author, some verbs, like *love*, have a strong subjective content, contrasting with verbs like *write*. Even those can present subtleties of meaning. A policeman can write a letter to a girlfriend or develop the report of a crime. Figure 3 shows how Kerbrat-Orecchioni classifies the verbs.

Figure 3. Verbs Classification According to Orecchioni



The evaluative value of a verb is strongly dependent on context, which makes the analysis of their subjectivity somewhat more complex. Let us consider, for example, two statements: (a) Mary longs for a trip to Europe and (b) Daddy’s face shows tranquility. Both verbs have evaluative character, but they are different in evaluation level and complexity. Statement (a) means that Mary considers the trip good for her, while statement (b) contains two possible evaluations: what Daddy is trying to convey and what Daddy is really going through. The sources of evaluation are also different: in (a) the source is the agent and in (b) the source is the narrator.

According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni, there is yet another axiology present, for example, in “Lucy babbles.” Here, the evaluation source is also the narrator, but reference is made not to something that happened during a process, but to the process itself. The author proposes three criteria for evaluation:

1. Judgment authorship: agent or narrator.
2. What is being evaluated: agent or process bringing along the agent.
3. Nature of the evaluation: good versus bad, true versus false, right versus wrong.

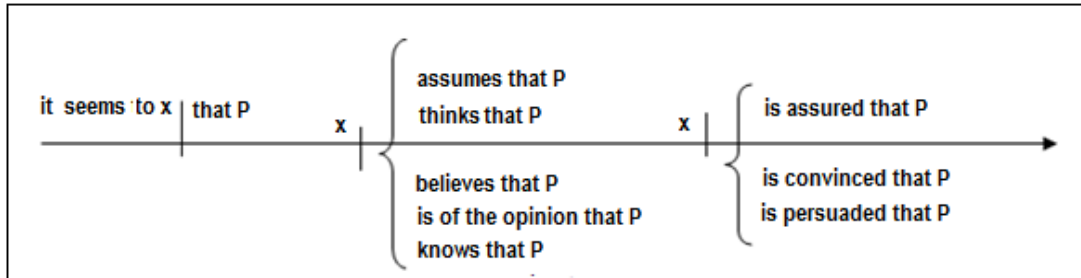
The following comments apply to the intrinsic or occasional nature of subjective verbs:

1. Occasionally subjective verbs imply an evaluation: (a) from the process object. For example, “vegetables help digestion”; (b) from the process agent. For example, “Mary fears John’s arrival.”
2. Intrinsically subjective verbs imply an evaluation whose source is always the enunciation subject, as in “the children yelled.” In this case, there is always a value judgment, which means that intrinsically subjective verbs are also intrinsically axiological.

The subjective verbs, as shown in the scheme, can be:

1. Affective: express a favorable or unfavorable bias from the agent towards the object, implying a positive or negative evaluation. For example, “Peter hates George” or “The people yearn for justice.”
Perceptive: related to sensorial experiences, often in a metaphoric way, like in “Paul smelled trouble” or “I see a solution there.”
2. Opivative: used by the speaker to inform the audience on the opinion of a third party or self, and indicate the degree of certitude. Orecchioni proposes a scheme to place the degree of certitude.

Figure 4: Degree of Certitude



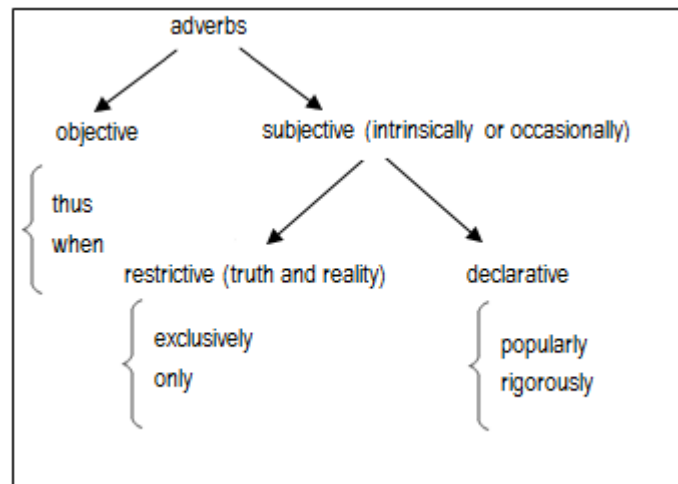
3. Declarative: can be of two types: (a) verbs like “say” or “declare” – the evaluative attitude does not include any degree of intensity; and (b) verbs like “recognize”, “admit” or “confess”, that perform a modalizing role, meaning they state the relationship between enunciator and subject.

Adverbs

Orecchioni (1997) classifies subjective adverbs in terms of their modalizing functions. According to her, this has to be done because of the complexity of the task of generating a taxonomy of subjective adverbs. The author defines modalization as “the set of significant procedures that indicate the degree of agreement (strong or mitigated)/uncertainty/repulse by the enunciator to what is enunciated.”

The classification, then, can be represented by the scheme that follows See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Adverbs Classification According to Orecchioni



Ethos

Isocrates (trans. 1894) seems to have been the first philosopher concerned with ethos as a concept. In *Encomium of Helen*, he commented that the novelty of discourse is not a value per se, and cannot be dissociated from the harmony between sentences, clear syntax providing good articulation to accessory elements. From the philosopher's perspective, discourse encompasses elegance, originality and clarity; it individualizes its enunciator. Language, according to Isocrates, is the capital feature that distinguishes humans from animals, and highly regarded citizens from those who do not go beyond everyday talk.

While Plato (transl. 2001), in his Dialogs, used a language that was logical, impersonal and cool; Isocrates maintained that discourse should be harmonious and pleasant to the listeners' ears. In Plato, there is no room for ethos, since truth is universal and does not depend on context or on the individual who enunciates it. The first step towards the concept of discursive ethos was taken by Isocrates with his remarks on the need for a well-groomed language as opposed to an instrument to find the truth. Such need adds up to the requirement of being ethical in developing the discourse and the construction of the orator as a distinct personality connected to his social role (Foucault, 1987). The last point is related to the orator's reputation. Among other scholars, Ruth Amossy (2004), a professor at the Tel Aviv University, considers Isocrates the first philosopher to study ethos, though under a different perspective than Aristotle, the organizer of rhetoric as a discipline.

Under Isocrates' (1894) point of view, as well as the perspective of Latin rhetoric (mostly Quintilian), the orator's ethos is the central element of persuasion. Two elements are important: the orator's reputation and the quality of his discourse. Good orators, therefore, are those who possess an ethos that deems them trustworthy and who are careful about their discourse. This outlook pioneered the view of a causal connection between character and discourse.

Aristotle (transl. 2003) also dedicated attention to the ethos of orators. He agrees that the ethos is molded from the orator's moral qualities, but denies it as an outcome of public image, external to

discourse. In Isocrates, the moral qualities shape the discourse, while in Aristotle the discourse constructs the orator's image. Both agree that the ethos is discursive, stems from enunciation and is character made clear from the discourse.

Cicero's rhetoric, according to Roland Barthes (1975), is some kind of simplification of Aristotle's. Like Aristotle, Cicero considers ethos (orator), pathos (audience) and logos (discourse), with ethos being the most important element. The character demonstrated by the orator is essential to obtain persuasion, but it depends on pathos, since one aims to move the audience. Cicero's theorization on eloquence basically consists of two aspects: ethical, related to the orator's behavior, and pathetic, searching support through emotion.

In medieval universities, the three subjects taught first were grammar, logic, and rhetoric – together, they were called the trivium. Sister Miriam Joseph (2002) lectured from the mid 1930s to the late 1950s a course at Saint Mary's College (South Bend, Indiana) on the trivium, and in 1937 published a version of the trivium written in modern language. The reading of the trivium makes clear that in the Middle Ages and Renaissance rhetoric was deemed essential for higher education, along with grammar and logic. Isocrates' ideas were then accepted in general and ethos was, depending on time, place and individual, based on the individuality of the orator (Cicero, Isocrates) or on the discourse per se (Aristotle). A long decay of rhetoric followed the 1500s, and after Romanticism, the discipline was all but abandoned, except for the teaching of figures of speech. Romanticism dealt rhetoric a severe blow, reacting to a rigid formalism that had gradually set in toward the end of the Ancien Regime. Goethe and those who followed contrasted rhetoric to a more personal and more sincere expression (Valladao, 2006).

In the second half of the twentieth century, there has been a revival of interest in rhetoric that, under the influence of Structuralism, began to be regarded as a precursor for the semiotic study of communication. Following the pragmatic nature of ancient rhetoric, Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca wrote, in 1958, *La Nouvelle Rhetorique*, an effort to formulate a modern theory of persuasive argumentation. In the 1980s, explicitly rhetorical models of composition started to be widely used to enhance communication skills. That is where we stand now.

The history of ethos as a concept shows that it is distinct from the "real" characteristics of the orator, though ethos and orator are associated as long as the orator is the source of enunciation (Maingueneau, 2005). The ethos characterizes the orator from the outside, externally, since the recipient places in the orator located in the world outside the discourse traits whose main source is in reality within the discourse. Such traits are related to a "manner of speaking" and may interfere with external data, like mimicry and clothing (Maingueneau, 1997).

All these points lead to the conclusion that the discussion on ethos is connected to the issue of identity construction. Every time someone takes a turn to talk, the representations the participants make of each other are taken into consideration, as well as the speech strategy of the talker, who directs the discourse in a manner that allows for the formation of an identity. When representations are mentioned, ethos becomes close to a social role, though not limited to it. All the theorization up to here is related to individuals, to speakers of a discourse. It is possible to expand the scope of the concepts and apply them to groups of people.

Organizational relations are established through communication. That includes a social context (Fairclough, 2001), composed of their internal and external publics. Such context also occurs within the discursive domain: work is done in the realm of discursive strategies in order to stimulate certain effects of sense. To convince and persuade someone to acquire a product or service, for example, is

a discursive strategy. Such processes are not merely informative: they are effective components of the organization. Visibility, as a strategic element is in this day and age sought by organizations. In other words, to “show up” became vital for organizations. If we consider the corporation as the subject of enunciation – as an enunciator, as the one who says something – we can apply to its discourse the concepts presented in this section, like subjectivity, ethos and social roles.

Official Statements by Air France in the Aftermath of an Accident – Ethos Constructed

On June 1, 2009 an Air France flight flying to Paris from Rio de Janeiro disappeared from radar overnight. What has happened to the flight remains unclear to this day. On that same day, Air France issued three official statements in four hours and forty minutes: the first one at 9:07 AM, the second at 11:12 and the third at 13:49. The very release and timing of those notes shows deep concern with company image.

We intend to demonstrate that the statements from Air France, typical of organizational discourse and supposedly based on facts are, in effect, bearers of subjectivity, products of the social roles involved, and constructs of company ethos.

First Statement

Air France regrets to announce that it has lost contact with flight AF 447 from Rio de Janeiro to Paris-Charles de Gaulle, expected to arrive this morning at 11:15 local time.

The flight left Rio on 31 May at 7 PM local time.

216 passengers are on board.

There are 12 crew members on board: 3 technical and 9 cabin crew.

The following toll-free numbers are available: 0800 881 2020 in Brazil, 0800 800 812 in France and + 33 1 57 02 10 55 in other countries.

Air France fully shares the anxiety and distress of the families of the passengers concerned. The families are been taken care of in a specially reserved area at Paris-Charles de Gaulle 2 airport and in the events room at Rio de Janeiro- Galeao Airport .

The statement appears to be quite objective after a first reading. It is clear, concise and demonstrates objectivity by means of discursive markers of time and place, using numbers to reinforce the unbiased nature of the statement.

The lexical choice characterized by the accuracy of hours and minutes, exact number of passengers and crew is evidence that the company does not intend to hide information. Such markers provide a character of truth to that discourse: the image of honesty and accountability looks real and needs to be shown rhetorically to maintain credibility. Such a choice, however, after a more careful reading, leads to subjective aspects – the use of adjectives and the presence of certain nouns, adverbs and even verbs reinforce subjectivity.

As early as in the first paragraph, the text tries to establish closeness with the audience through a stern appeal to pathos: “Air France regrets to announce that it has lost contact [...]”. Though it is written in the third person, there is a personification of the airline. Air France acquires characteristics of an individual – to regret is not in fact an attribute of an organization.

If nouns in theory reinforce the sense of truthfulness (news, flight, crew, passengers), affective nouns present in the statement do show subjectivity. That is the case of *anxiety* and *distress*. The noun *family* is strategically placed to provide a strong presence of pathos. The statement contains four short paragraphs, apparently more objective, and two longer and more subjective paragraphs, one of them concentrating the affective nouns.

The statement has few adjectives. The ones present are particularly impregnated with subjectivity, though related to factual aspects: *reserved* (area) and *concerned*. The adjective *technical* (crew) is used to highlight the idea that no fact will be hidden. The ethos is, again, strengthened.

There are a large number of verbs in relation to the size of the statement: *announce*, *lose* (contact), *expect* and *arrive* intend to be objective indicators, but reinforce, subjectively, the ethos of reliability. They also establish the position of Air France: it does not know yet what did happen and informs the public of such fragility. On the other hand, the verbs *regret*, *share* and *take* (care of) are effectively subjective and, again, appeal to the audience's pathos. That insistence in constructing the image of a company concerned with the well being of its clients and kin is a constitutive element of corporate ethos. The verbs are always presented in direct order, conveying readiness for action: *regrets*, *left*, *shares*. No passive voice is present, strengthening the enunciator's intention. It is interesting to note the present tense in *216 passengers are on board*, followed by *there are 12 crew members* [...]. The tense of the verb carries the will and the hope of all being alive.

There are two adverbs in the statement: *fully* and *specially*. They are also connected to concern with the potential victims, their family and friends and are highly subjective in presenting an ethos of solidarity.

In acknowledging the fact that there is no news to be presented the text lessens the lack of power. The agent is in a situation of impossibility, and, as far as ethos is concerned, that fact annuls the effect caused by powerlessness. Another way to enhance ethos is the avoidance of a negative sentence: the airline is proactive, takes initiative. On the whole, there is a personification of the airline through the use of verbs customarily used by individuals. Again, an organization does not regret and does not feel. It possibly might be said that Air France's managers use a figure of speech, personification, to create a positive image. It is no coincidence that another name for personification is pathetic fallacy, pathetic referring to pathos.

To determine the place and moment the airplane took off creates yet another rhetorical effect: the discursive distance of any commitment to the social role of the corporation: the plane left, and this is an irrefutable truth. What came later, nobody knows. Conversely, the accurate information on the number of passengers and crew tries to capture the audience by logos, meaning truth, knowledge, typical of the journalistic discourse.

Though the word *accident* is never used and the airline makes clear in the first paragraph that it has no intention to do so, the remainder of the statement is constructed in that direction. The verbs are particularly clear: *regret*, *shares* (anxiety and distress). The clear possibility of a tragedy is implicit in the choice of words, the discursive construction and in the audience's common sense. Though seemingly based on logos, the factual, the discourse is mostly constructed with elements typical of pathos, the emotion. Even the most objective sentences do show implicit perceptions: *our employees are also there*; we are part of the same group, with the same worries and anxiety. That expands a social group that in some respects is reminiscent of a family. Air France's text does not present any apologies; and it does whatever is possible to minimize distress. The rhetoric action is strongly associated to pathos, since it tries to induce in the public a feeling of solidarity and sympathy and through rhetoric force, raise a feeling of consolation.

Meyer's theories on logos apply to the analysis of that discourse: there are weak problems (straight questions, easily replied) but also implicit unknowns and impossibility of answers. At the moment of the official statement, there is no identification with legal discourse (the corporation does not defend itself) or with epideictic discourse (no qualities or defects are mentioned, directly or indirectly). Such discourse, then, must be deliberative, another classification by Meyer. So, according to Meyer's problematology, the discourse is deliberative and of maximum difficulty (no criteria are yet established to answer the questions).

Consciously or unconsciously, speakers bring different experiences to the audience. Social and mental representations are the way individuals experience the world – in a text, senses are constructed along with mental representations. In other words, in the case under study it is possible to say that the audience constructs the ethical sense of the corporation based on their own beliefs, their knowledge and their previous experiences. So, Air France's statement is *social* because it's directed to a group (resembling a family); *cognitive* because it appeals to the knowledge of the audience; *symbolic* because built with words, and *interactional* because it brings complexity and interaction between various groups.

Ethos is constructed out of solidarity (the crew is also in the airplane), truthfulness (the airline has no news) and delivery of exact information. There is also an aspect connected to pathos along the whole statement that closes at the last paragraph, with the offering of a reserved space to the families and round the clock telephone lines for information. The ethos conveyed is one of a true, responsible and compassionate corporation.

Second Statement

The second statement, released two hours after the first, repeats parts of the first statement and adds other data.

Air France regrets to confirm the disappearance of flight AF 447 flying from Rio de Janeiro to Paris-Charles de Gaulle, scheduled to arrive at 11:10 AM local time today, as announced to the press by Air France CEO, Pierre-Henri Gourgeon.

The Airbus A330-200, registration F-GZCP, left Rio on 31 May at 7:03 PM local time (12:03 AM in Paris).

The aircraft hit a zone of stormy weather with strong turbulence at 2 AM this morning (universal time), i.e. 4 AM in Paris. An automatic message was received from the aircraft at 2:14 AM (4:14 AM in Paris) indicating a failure in the electric circuit a long way from the coast.

The Brazilian, African, Spanish and French air traffic control centers all tried to make contact with flight AF 447 but to no avail. The French military air traffic control center tried to detect the aircraft but did not succeed.

216 passengers were on board: 126 men, 82 women, 7 children and one infant.

There were 12 flight crew members: 3 pilots and 9 flight attendants.

The flight captain had a record of 11,000 flight hours and had already flown 1,700 hours on Airbus A330/A340s.

Of the two first officers, one had flown 3,000 flight hours (800 of which on the Airbus A330/A340) and the other 6,600 (2,600 on the Airbus A330/A340).

The aircraft was powered by General Electric CF6-80E engines.

The aircraft had totaled 18,870 flight hours and went into service on 18 April 2005.

Its last maintenance check in the hangar took place on 16 April 2009.

Air France fully shares the anxiety and distress of the families concerned. The families are being taken care of in a specially reserved area of Paris-Charles de Gaulle Terminal 2 and in the events room located at the 1st floor of the administration building of Rio de Janeiro-Galeao Airport .

The following toll-free numbers are available: 0800 881 2020 in Brazil, 0800 800 812 in France and + 33 1 57 02 10 55 in other countries.

The first paragraph maintains the style of the corresponding paragraph of the first statement but does admit that the aircraft disappeared. That paragraph repeats the former text almost verbatim but presents an effective speaker. The announcement made by the CEO identified by his name bears witness to the facts and provides more credibility. As in the former statement, the voice presented is still the voice of the corporation, but there is more discursive commitment to the public, that being the reason to give the CEO's name. References to the aircraft are added and the second paragraph shows a detailed report of the flight from takeoff to disappearance. Now the numbers have the same function of truthfulness reinforcement, but the text is getting closer to legal defense discourse. Again, all those numbers are not capable of hiding the ever-present subjectivity, as shown by the study of the subjectivemes.

The nouns *turbulence* and *failure* appear to be objective since they represent facts. However, they do bear subjectivity – it is possible to place them as evaluative non-axiological. The choice of those nouns strengthens the airlines position as a blameless victim of the storm or the unpredictable electrical failure. The audience is subtly persuaded to construct a setting inserting the aircraft in an environment where damage is highly possible. The noun *disappearance* has the subjective function of mitigating the impact that a word like *accident* would produce in the reader. Actually, the word *accident* is avoided throughout the text, though certainly implicit.

Again, the adjectives are few, to maintain the appearance of objectivity. But the use made of those adjectives is highly subjective, always reinforcing airline blamelessness: the weather was *stormy*, the turbulence was *strong*, the message was *automatic* (high technology). The main point made by the adjectives is that nothing could possibly be done, since the misfortune had happened *far away*.

The subjective verbs are connected to adverbs. The sentence [...] *tried to make contact*, might point to a weakened ethos, since not connected to an action, but the verb is strengthened by the adverbial phrase *to no avail* and the meaning is that there was a struggle, fought until there was no possibility whatsoever. That verb *try* appears again in the same paragraph, also associated with an expression (*but did not succeed*) that reinforces the idea of impossibility, enhances the argument of innocence and emphasizes the sense of search for a solution.

More information and more numbers constantly remind the reader that the corporation is trustworthy. This time, the statement presents arguments of quality (experienced pilot, aircraft

produced by a major manufacturer, careful maintenance) and quantity (number of flight hours of pilot and aircraft). Another boost to company ethos is the description of the presence of authorities in several countries, which participated in the unfruitful attempts. This has two effects: present an ethos of cooperation and dilute the blame.

There is in fact a subjective preparation for the legal discourse, anticipating a defense on charges that are not yet exactly known. Such anticipation is one of the lines to construct ethos: the enunciator of the second statement builds the text, from the beginning, on a factual basis, strongly associated to logos. The evidence of meteorological phenomena (storm, turbulence), the distance of the aircraft and the presence of authorities are used for a future defense. In the second statement, the rhetorical force lies strongly in establishing audience trust by appealing to logos. Pathos is also present, as seen in the analysis of the first statement.

The discourse in the first statement seeks to develop internal and external demonstrations of solidarity and the second statement aims to convince through emphasis on the efforts being made. The first statement is directed to a definite audience: families, authorities, competitors and the airline itself, internally. The second statement is aimed at a more general audience: anyone who wants to know about Air France's competence: qualified manpower and well maintained aircraft.

According to Meyer's problematology, the argumentative path towards the establishment of reason uses the resources of logos, namely the concepts of explicit and implicit, and considers the effects of sense. There is no formal logic, but the data supplied (flight hours, aircraft and engine manufacturers) make the audience infer authenticity. Those numbers and facts could take to textual literality – in such a case, the problematization would be weak or even null – but by generating questions with no answers, they turn the discourse into quasi-legal, and of high problematization. That closeness to legal discourse conveys an ethos in search of a defense. The discourse, according to Meyer, is deliberative and the ethos therein expresses an ethos that has a utilitarian component.

Third Statement

The third statement was issued two hours after the second one and returns to the more personal tone.

Air France expresses its deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the passengers and crew who were on board this flight.

Air France is doing its utmost to provide support to relatives and friends: counseling with physicians and psychologists as well as specially trained Air France volunteers has been set up at the airports of Paris-Charles de Gaulle 2 and Rio de Janeiro.

Air France has also established a special toll-free number for the attention of relatives and friends of passengers who may have been on board. They can use this number to obtain information on whether or not a member of their family or friends was on board.

Phone number reserved for relatives and friends:
0800 800 812 in France,
0800 881 20 20 in Brazil,
and + 33 1 57 02 10 55 for calls from all other countries.

Air France will release further information as soon as it is available.

There is an important novelty in the third statement: the present tense is abandoned to describe the events and passengers and crew are referred to using the past tense. This is a subjective announcement of the worst news. Though death of passengers and crew is not mentioned, the noun *sympathy* and the adjective *deepest* leave very little room for doubt.

The social group is broadened in relation to the first statement. Now the discourse audience comprises family, relatives and friends. Those nouns define the audience and also enhance the intimacy between enunciator and the audience. Though directed to a universal audience, since the statement is supposed to reach the largest possible number of persons, there is a particular group of high interest: family, relatives and friends, who will be counseled by professionals with specific training. It can be emphasized that by providing those specialized professionals, Air France appeals rhetorically to the locus of quality. Both quantity (the whole family, all relatives and friends, no matter how numerous) and quality (of aircraft, pilots and care provided) are shown in Air France's discourse.

Conclusion

It is possible to observe in the three statements by Air France the existence of dichotomous philosophical pairs (Perelman & Tyteca, 1999): be vs. seem, objectivity vs. subjectivity and the subcategory truth vs. secret. The corporation strives to appear honest and sincere. By means of numbers and the authority of its CEO, it seeks to establish a level of veracity that it hopes will not be challenged. Another veracity indicator is promptness: information is released as soon as available.

Since every text is intentional and there are a number of resources available to the author, it is fair to assert that there is no such thing as an entirely objective language. Most texts seek to establish some connection between two poles: good and evil; right and wrong. It is therefore possible to consider that there are different discourses on the same object that carry values that are intrinsic to the subject of enunciation. Though organizational communications, herein represented by official statements on accidents that seek to express truths, facts, and occurrences, it is possible to assert that subjectivity cannot be avoided.

The hypothesis that subjectivity in discourse is an important agent for the development of corporate ethos is confirmed. The analysis of a typical organizational communications text demonstrated the strong presence of subjectivity and identified its markers during the study of subjectivemes. It was found that affective and evaluative subjectivemes plus axiology are deeply ingrained in organizational discursive practice. Every discourse stems from concepts, values and experiences created through human diversity and subjectivity is always present when ethos is determined by and within the discourse.

References

- Amossy, R. (2005). *Imagens de si no discurso – A construção do ethos* [Images of self in discourse]. São Paulo: Contexto.
- Aristotle. (2003). *Arte retórica e arte poética* [Rhetoric and poetic art] (A. P. Carvalho, Trans.)(14th ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro.
- Barthes, R (1975). *Critica e verdade* [Criticism and truth]. São Paulo: Perspeciva.
- Benveniste, E. (1974). *Problemes de linguistique generale* [Problems in general linguistics]. Paris: Gallimard.

- Ducrot, O. (1987). *O dizer e o dito* [The saying and the said]. Campinas: Pontes Editores, SP.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Discurso e mudanca social* [Discourse and social change]. Brasilia: Editora Universidade de Brasilia.
- Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foucault Reader: On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress; beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Isocrates (1894). *Encomium of Helen* (J. H. Freese, Trans.). Retrieved from <http://fxylib.znu.edu.cn/wgfljd/%B9%C5%B5%E4%D0%DE%B4%C7%D1%A7/pw/isocrates/pwisoc10.htm>
- Joseph. M. (2002). *The trivium: The liberal arts of logic, grammar and rhetoric*. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. (1994). *Les interactions verbales* [The verbal interactions]. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. (1997). *La enunciacion de la subjetividad en el lenguaje* [The enunciation of subjectivity in language]. Buenos Aires: Edicial.
- Kunsch, M. M. K. (2009). *Comunicacao organizacional – Historico, fundamentos e processos* [Organizational communication – History, foundations and processes]. Sao Paulo: Saraiva.
- Maingueneau, D. (1997). *Novas tendencias em analise do discurso* [New trends in discourse analysis] (3rd Ed.). Campinas: Pontes Editora da Universidade Estadual de Campinas.
- Maingueneau, D. (2005). *Analise de textos de comunicacao* [Analysis of communication texts] (4th ed.). Sao Paulo: Cortez.
- Meyer, M. (1991). *A problematologia* [Problematology]. Lisboa: Publicacoes Dom Quixote.
- Meyer, M. (2007a). *A Retorica* [Rhetoric]. Sao Paulo, Editora Atica.
- Meyer, M. (2007b). *Questoes de retorica, linguagem, razao e seducao* [Issues on rhetoric, reason and seduction]. Lisbon: Edicoes 70.
- Perelman, C., & Tyteca, L. O. (1999). *Tratado da argumentacao – A nova retorica* [Treatise on argumentation – The new Rhetoric]. Sao Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Perelman, C. (2002). *Etica e direito* [Ethics and law]. Sao Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Plato. (2001). *Dialogos* [Dialogues] (J. Paleikat, Trans.) (5th ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro.

Russell, K. (2006). *100th anniversary of the declaration of principles*. Retrieved from http://www.teachingpr.org/teaching_pr/2006/09/100th-anniversa.html

Valladao, C. (2006). Goethe, o Eikones de Filóstrato e a resistência aos românticos [Goethe, Philostratus' Eikones, and the Resistance to the Romantics]. *Revista USP*, 71, 106-115.

ANA LUCIA MAGALHAES is a professor of corporate communications with FATEC (Guaratingueta and Cruzeiro), a network of technical colleges funded by the State of Sao Paulo. She holds a Master's degree in Rethoric from the Catholic University of Sao Paulo.

BRUNO ANDREONI is an engineer with Servtec, an engineering and construction company in Sao Paulo. Has 30 years design and operationd experience and is presently in charge of technical communications with clients. Holds Engineering and Chemistry degrees from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.